



At a glance

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Geographies, Mobilities, and Rhythms Over the Life-Course: Adventures in the Interval Routledge, New York and London, 2015

“Sparkling with ideas.” David Bissell, The Australian National University

This capstone work represents 15 years’ thinking on two questions: As we move through our lives, how do we conduct or govern ourselves and each other, and in doing so how are we to constitute the spaces and flows for a life that is flourishing? Six studies ground these reflections in terms of:

- the geographies of conception and ‘life’ before birth,
- the challenges island children will face when loss of territory also means loss of sovereignty,
- claims to the city by teenagers and young people—and skaters and parkour practitioners in particular,
- the tragedy of the war on terror and its relationship to commuting among adult workers, with reference to the London bombings,
- the ways in which older people reconcile themselves to aging and seek to stay well by being physically active, and
- the ways in which we confront dying and death through the life-course, most especially among the oldest-old in our communities.

1 Adventures in the interval

The essays in this collection are critically concerned with journeys over the life-course. Chapter one explains and justifies such a focus, and responds to calls for more finely nuanced work on (a) the politics of mobility, (b) emotional geographies, (c) the role of auto-ethnographic reflection, and (d) the rhythms that constitute our lives in motion. Attention is paid to the significance of key ideas—certain geographies, mobilities, rhythms; the conduct of conduct; and what it means to live a good, just, and flourishing life.

2 Shifting places of origin

How might one think through the geographies involved in bringing to life? After exploring how the pre-embryo, embryo, and fetus are understood as categories of being, I consider the meanings and significance of *The Miracle of Life*, a lauded documentary by Swedish photojournalist Lennart Nilsson. Juxtaposed against this influential origin story are others, and other rhythms, mobilities, and geographies, that arise from ‘bringing into life’. I seek to account for these embodied and disembodied geographies and the moral landscapes they engender.

3 Fluid terrain

Some 650 million people live on islands and archipelagos—frontlines of climate change and sea-level rise. That islands may be part of ‘ground zero’ for such change prompts varied, sometimes disabling, responses. It is particularly concerning that the island child is sometimes rendered silent or absent in the process. This chapter works to unsettle such marginalization, asking how might one think about the geographies, mobilities, and rhythms of anthropogenic climate change and their effects on young islanders, citizenship, sovereignty, and territory.

4 Grind and trace

How might skateboarding and parkour invite us to think about the value of playful spaces, rights to the city, and generosity? Skating and tracing invite close prompt consideration of several questions: how might existing scholarship on walking inform a reading of skating and parkour and their geographies, mobilities, and rhythms? How do skaters and traceurs use urban spaces and produce playful geographies contoured by particular movements and rhythms? How and to what effect are they governed in ways that appear to render them unwelcome?

5 Encountering the Circle Line

Adulthood is a long stretch, and three chapters examine different rhythms and mobilities of these decades. Chapter five, the first of these, explores commuting as a mundane venture in the intervals of adult lives that simultaneously is regulated, regularized, and at risk of disruption—sometimes by dint of force and in ways that violently affect our capacity to flourish. How do adults experience the practice of commuting? In what ways might commuting be considered dwelling-in-motion? What do increasingly violent disruptions to commuting as dwelling-in-motion mean for how we think about conduct and flourishing?

6 Move it or lose it

Attention shifts in chapter six to examine how the idea of staying young—or of being ‘not-old’—is taken up among those in middle and later life in ways. Examination is made of the ways in which the aging body is constituted as in decline, and those are contrasted with notions and counter-narratives of positive aging. Certain geographies, mobilities, and rhythms are implicated in regimes to produce fitness as an alternative to decline, and these are considered to reveal what it means to flourish in middle and later life,

7 The undiscovered country

The geographies, mobilities, and rhythms that attend death, the undiscovered country, are the subjects of chapter seven. My task in this penultimate chapter is to consider senescence, dying, and death at all stages of the life-course, and most especially among the oldest-old. How are we to understand the movement through stages of liveliness to frailty and dying into death? How are we to reflect on the rhythms, mobilities, and geographies of life at its close, and understand what this journey means for those who die and for those who remain?

8 Space to flourish

In this last chapter, I return to my initial points of departure: questions about the geographies, mobilities, and rhythms of the life-course that allow reflection upon questions of conduct and the manner in which we constitute the spaces of a good, just and flourishing life. I provide a comprehensive summary of each chapter, drawing out its particular insights, and posit the importance of remembering that we have immense capacity to be *homo reparans*—a repairing and caring species. This capacity is enlivened *because* we placed in the world as vibrantly spatial, mobile, and rhythmic creatures.



Chris – cat leap – Abbey Road.
Photo Andy Day

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